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REMARKS

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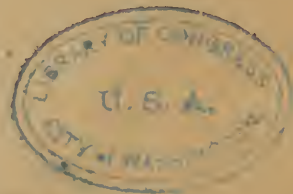
HON. LEWIS CASS, OF MICHIGAN,

MADE IN

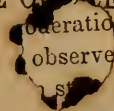
THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES, MARCH 10, 1856,

ON THE

STATE OF OUR RELATIONS WITH ENGLAND, AND THE POLICY
OF INCREASING OUR MILITARY AND NAVAL MEANS.



WASHINGTON:
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1856.



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OUR NATIONAL ARMAMENTS.

The bill appropriating three millions of dollars for the manufacturing and repair of small-arms, equipping fortifications, and providing ammunition, being under consideration in the Senate,

Mr. CASS said: Mr. President, I do not rise to discuss the details of this bill. I approve it, and shall support it. But my object in rising is to enter a kind of protest against the sentiments I have heard advanced here to-day, that it is dangerous to increase our military means because England might take offense at such a measure, and that it might augment the irritation already prevailing in that country. I do not believe in such a policy of forbearance, as I have already shown by my action in the Senate.

When the information first reached us some time since that a peace would soon probably terminate the war prevailing in Europe, I submitted a resolution instructing the Committee on Naval Affairs to inquire into the expediency of increasing the Navy of the United States. I thought this was a precautionary measure, dictated as well by prudence as by patriotism. Before it was in my power to move the adoption of the resolution, I was prevented by an accident from attending the Senate, and when I was able to resume my seat I was told by the chairman of the Naval Committee, that the subject of the augmentation of our maritime force had engaged their attention, and that he was about to report a bill for that purpose. This was done within a day or two; and under these circumstances I thought it inexpedient to press my proposition. The bill was passed; and though I think the increase it provides falls short of what the situation of the country demands,

yet I voted for it with pleasure, as an important step in the right direction.

Sir, the external circumstances affecting us have materially changed since the annual estimates were laid before Congress. We had, indeed, at that time differences pending with England, but these differences have since assumed a much more serious character there and here; and as their gravity has increased, and with it the public excitement, England finds herself upon the point of being relieved from a terrible conflict, which demanded all her energies and resources, and operated as a security for her moderation towards other Powers, inducing her to yield to the suggestions of prudence what she might refuse to the dictates of justice. If she is freed from the present struggle she will come out of it with the possession of a great unemployed force, and with the loss of much of her military prestige, added to disappointed hopes and wounded national vanity arising out of the events of a war which have been more favorable to the renown of her ancient enemy and recent friend, and always rival, than to her own.

It might well be, sir, that, in this condition of comparative humiliation, she might have no objections to seeking in the West that glory which she had anticipated, but had failed to find, in the East; or, at any rate, these considerations might operate to render her more tenacious of the positions she had assumed, and less disposed to meet us in a spirit of moderation. And certainly, sir, no man can fail to observe that, as the probability of peace has grown stronger, the bluster in England—I borrow the word from Lord John Russell, who applied it to Mr. Polk—has become

more violent, till the latter is almost a measurement of the former.

It is not long since this feeling was indicated by a distinguished review, the North Briton, which observed by way of warning, or of threatening, or probably both, that the same fleet which passes the summer in the Black Sea may pass the winter in the Gulf of Mexico. It was at no time improper to look at our means of attack and defense, but it is our especial duty to do so as the affairs of the country become more critical. There is one peculiarity in our condition, which our whole history has disclosed, and that is an insuperable objection in the minds of the American people to the permanent support of a great military establishment. What Mr. Madison called the armor and attitude of war, will never be assumed until war is upon us. Of course, our arrangements to meet it are hastily made, but they are made with a spirit and energy which no other country has ever displayed, and which enable us to face events as they are forced upon us. And I observe that even the London Times is not blind to this national characteristic, its vision being obviously rendered clearer by the occurrences in the Crimea. Speaking of war it says:

"Our merchants would find a foe as well as a rival in every part of the world. We are aware that we should have to deal with an enemy inheriting all our enterprise and daring, but not burdened, as we are, by a national debt and a host of incapables, or trammelled by a court, an aristocracy, and the routine of which the report from the Crimea discloses such sadly fantastic examples. We do not forget how quickly the United States raised the armies that reduced Mexico and wrested from her whole provinces. We know that twenty-five millions of men of European and chiefly British blood are not to be despised. We could hardly expect to suffer much less damage than we could inflict."

The fact is, we have in the United States no soldiers in the European acceptance of the term; no class set apart for the business of fighting. Our embodied military force is too small to form an exception to this remark; but the whole nation is a nation of soldiers when the safety of the country demands their services. Habituated to fire-arms, and fitted by habit for almost any employment, each feels his own interest involved in the general welfare, and all are ready to repair from their homes to the battle-field, prepared to do their duty, and animated by a spirit of patriotism which leaves to the Government the task of determining whose voluntary offers shall be declined, not whose shall be accepted. The difficulty is in saying who shall go, not who shall go. The world has never seen such displays of mili-

tary ardor and patriotism as are furnished by the history of this country in periods of difficulty and danger.

This very state of things, however, renders it but the more proper to regard with careful attention the course and conduct of other nations, the pretensions they advance, and the results which their measures appear to foreshadow. Obvious as this duty is, it is scarcely ever fulfilled, but the cry immediately goes forth, and often from this place, that war is desired. It is an idle charge, sir, scarcely deserving serious refutation. To adopt the side of our country in her dispute with another Power is not to desire war. It is to desire that humiliating concessions should not be made, but that, if war is forced upon us, we should be ready to meet its responsibilities. Its true aim is to avert war, not to invite it; to avert it by showing that we are aware of our position, and are not to be driven from it by arrogance and injustice. My friend from Tennessee, [Mr. BELL,] as true a patriot as we have amongst us, in his remarks the other day, fell into this error. He renewed the oft-repeated story of my *bellicose* disposition towards England, (this is his word, not mine,) founding the charge upon nothing better than the freedom with which I examine her pretensions, and the earnest desire I express, as I am convinced my country is right, that she will yield nothing to the unjust demands made upon her.

The Senator seemed to think that this course of discussion here would be considered by England as a determination to *cut the Gordian knot with the sword*. So be it, sir, if she has the arrogance to view the debates here as trenching upon her rights and honor—as a menace, to adopt a phrase which the Senator used upon that occasion. If the statesmen, or people of England, in that spirit of assumption so often displayed in her history, connect the free discussion of our cause with the determination to appeal from the arbitrament of reason to that of force, let them learn to correct their error in the school of experience. I repeat what I before said, the people of this country desire no war with England. Every man knows the calamities which such a rupture would bring with it; and certainly, at my time of life, and with the experience I have had, I am among the last to look with satisfaction upon such a prospect. But we are not to lay our hands upon our mouths and our mouths in the dust, lest a foreign Power should see in

the examination of their conduct a foregone determination to engage in hostilities. I agree, at least, with one sentiment recently advanced by Lord Palmerston, that "what a Government has to consider is the justice of its cause, and what is befitting the honor and dignity of the country." That, I trust, will ever be our rule of action; and if it leads to peace, so much the better, but if to war, we should meet it as we may.

We find no example, either formerly or recently, in English history, of this careful attention to the feelings of another nation, and of this studied purpose to avoid giving offense by avoiding the discussion of national differences. Why, sir, the people and the press of England, are equally violent in their denunciations of our country and her position. I am not going to quote the terms of abuse so lavishly employed. They show how improvement follows practice; for, in the extensive experience we have heretofore had on the receipt of similar national favors, we have received none more significant than these. The articles from the leading journals which prove this state of feeling have been everywhere republished, and read in our country, and precious exhibitions they are of *good sense* and *good feeling*. In one point of view only are they worthy of attention, except as indications of national character, and that is, because they are equally indications of that deep-rooted sentiment of aversion which animates the public mind in that country towards the United States.

I know it has been apologetically said here, for apologies are never found wholly wanting, that these publications speak only the feelings of the editors, and not those of the great body of the people. Sir, there is no foundation for this distinction between writers and readers. The great leading papers of London are unerring indications of popular sentiment through the island, whether leading or led by it, especially when they are united, without reference to party distinctions, in questions interesting to the English people; and this union is now almost without exception, and is of itself one of the most pregnant signs of the times. Let no one, therefore, object to their examination here in this branch of the National Legislature. They are legitimate subjects, important, indeed, of investigation in the consideration of our affairs with England, as they furnish the means of investigating the condition of the public mind, and how far it is prepared to approve extreme measures. He who believes

that all the London journals, during a session of Parliament, when the statesmen and politicians of the kingdom are assembled there, strongly advocate views of great questions of public policy unacceptable to the English people, knows little of the causes which operate upon public opinion in that country. Straws they may be in themselves so far as respects our course or our cause, but they show the force and direction of the wind.

Some of the most violent of these papers are the supporters and under the control of members of the Cabinet, and appreciate their own position too well to give utterance to a single thought in relation to grave public matters unacceptable to their leaders. When, therefore, I read well-turned periods of conciliation uttered by Lord Palmerston in the House of Peers, while he holds on with characteristic tenacity to the last letter of his construction of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty, by which he maintains that the engagement on the part of England, that she will not occupy any part of Central America except the part provided for, does not mean what it says, but it means that she will not occupy any more of it than she claimed at the date of the treaty, or, in other words, that she will not increase her occupation—when I read this, and then turn to the miserable diatribe, preëminent for its arrogant abuse against the United States, which has recently appeared in his journal, the *Morning Post*, I am free to confess that the coarse effusion of the paper more than neutralizes the professions of the Peer, and, in my opinion, speaks more truly his sentiments.

In that precious exhibition of British moderation the world is told that we have no government, and are in pretty much the condition of the Gauls and Germans in the days of Julius Cæsar; and that we are as much without the pale of European principles as China or Japan, or the African communities, especially the Kaffir chiefs, to whom we are likened; and that we must be dealt with differently from civilized nations. It proposes that the European Powers should come to a common understanding how to deal with us; and that France and England should place themselves at the head of this new crusade of civilization; that they should watch our coasts and search our vessels, and take men out at their pleasure, upon pretexts to be judged by themselves; and if necessary, this scheme should be carried out to the last extremity. And this is the serious proposition of a great London newspaper, known to be at-

tached to, and supporting the interest of, Lord Palmerston. The United States are to be *tabooed*, to be declared a political leper, and to be excluded from the company of the sovereign Powers of the world; and their citizens, like the proscribed caste of old, to cry "Unclean, unclean!" wherever they go.

I have no objection to the indulgence of that boasting propensity which makes part of the English character; indeed, this self-complacent exhibition rather amuses me. We have a complete display of it at this moment; and are timely warned that, on the firing of the first hostile gun, our commerce is to be swept from the ocean, our sea-board devastated, our cities plundered and destroyed, and, I suppose, our national independence annihilated. "Let not him boast that putteth on his armor," says the volume of inspiration, no less than the volume of human experience, "but him who putteth it off." This fanfaronade is an old story. A certain General, named Burgoyne, said, in the British House of Commons, at the commencement of our revolutionary war, that he could march through the Colonies at the head of a single regiment of dragoons. And I believe that was the general sentiment in England; it was truly an English one. In a few short months the self-sufficient orator exchanged St. Stephen's chapel for the forests of America, and placing himself at the head of a well-appointed army of seven or eight thousand men, he marched into our country a few short miles, and there fulfilled his promise by an unconditional surrender of his army.

When we entered upon our last war with England, our flag was contemptuously designated as striped bunting, and our armed ships as fir-built frigates; but when we came out of it, that striped bunting had so often floated over St. George's cross, and those fir-built frigates had so often redeemed their character in desperate conflicts and by capturing their opponents, that even national vanity, in its own defense, was compelled to admit the prowess of our gallant navy. And this exaltation of their own power extends beyond us to the other nations of the world; for but a few short months have passed away since Petersburg and Moscow were to fall, and the Czar to be driven back to the primitive inheritance of the Russian ruler in Asia. But Moscow, and Petersburg, and Russia, have survived the power and the threats of England.

It is wonderful, sir, to observe what ignorance

of the true condition of our institutions pervades the English journals, and, I may add, the English community. Among the crude speculations which have recently come to us from the other side of the Atlantic, are some regarding the present posture of our affairs with England. It is supposed we have no Government, and that Congress and the President and the country are guided by the idlest motives that ever entered into the human imagination. I shall not stop to repeat them, contenting myself with observing that the failure of the House of Representatives to elect a Speaker seems to have been considered the knell of the Government. It is emphatically termed the **DEAD LOCK**—an insuperable bar to our progress. Now, sir, to us in this country it is really laughable to suppose that such an incident as that could exert the slightest influence upon the destinies of our institutions. They are controlled by far higher causes—by the will of the American people; and if this dead lock, as it is called, had even continued during the whole term of the present Congress, the people would have stood between their institutions and danger, and would have taken efficient measures to insure the operations of their Government. In fact, sir, such is the moral power of our institutions, that the political machine would for a while almost go on by its own momentum. From the landing at Jamestown and at Plymouth, our history is a school teaching how free and equal Governments may be organized and maintained by the spontaneous action of the people, in the face of whatever obstacles may occasionally present themselves.

While I was in Paris, an incident happened, which furnishes another example of this European ignorance. It is worth referring to in this connection as a characteristic trait. When the news reached there that there had been some disturbances in Harrisburg, which had caused the members of the Legislature to quit their hall of assemblage, there was a good deal of excitement, and it was considered, if not an actual revolution, as the precursor of one. The state of things in this country was judged by the state of things in France, and the members of the Chamber of Deputies could not be driven by violence from their seats without an explosion which would shake the kingdom. I was asked by a distinguished French functionary—and with a manner which seemed to say, your country is in a bad way—what would be the probable result of this

interruption of the public authority?—for Harrisburg or Washington was, I suppose, to them the same thing. I answered, that the next packet would probably bring information that some justice of the peace had issued his warrant, and that the offenders had been apprehended and punished, and that with this exercise of authority the whole matter would pass away. And such, in fact, was the result. With one exception, this Government, in my opinion, sir, is the strongest Government on the face of the globe. There is no question but a sectional one which can destroy it. If we learn to be wise and avoid all irritating interference between the North and the South, leaving every portion of our country to manage its affairs for itself, upon its own responsibility, we may reasonably look forward to the indefinite extension of the best and freest form of government ever committed to man. If we do not, we may learn wisdom at as great a sacrifice as man ever paid for his error.

After these experiments of the British press, to which I have referred, upon the taste and feelings of their own country, and upon the forbearance of this, it required a good deal of courage on the part of the London Times, while alluding to the views entertained, to say: "We believe that much of this recklessness [that is, an advocacy of our own cause] is owing to the habitually pacific tone in which the United States are constantly spoken of in England."

I am at a loss to judge whether this remark is an assertion or a sarcasm. If the former, it is as little creditable to the wisdom as to the veracity of that reckless paper. If the latter, it is one redeeming concession, the more valuable as it is almost without example.

"The British people," says the same great controller of public opinion in England, "are very slow to go to war, but they are still slower to make peace." This national trait, thus discovered and disclosed, must push the credulity of John Bull about as far as he can bear, and that is saying a good deal; while the pretension excites the ridicule of the rest of the world. It has been often said, that the last person a man knows is himself; and that the remark is equally true of nations, needs no better illustration than this vaunt of the disposition of England to bear and forbear, evinced by the slowness and reluctance with which she suffers herself to be driven into hostilities.

"The BRITISH PEOPLE ARE VERY SLOW TO GO

TO WAR!" Why, sir, their history for centuries past has been little else than a history of their hostilities with the other Powers of the earth, civilized and uncivilized, for they have been very impartial in their aggressions, as neither Christian nor Pagan has escaped their assaults.

"*Slow to go to war!*" Why, for the last one hundred and fifty years they have hardly been at peace. Their armed ships have been prowling round the world, seeking territory they might devour. Ay, and finding it, too—from mighty continents to the smallest islet that decks the ocean. If they had a temple of Janus, as had the Romans, their predecessors in wars and acquisitions, it would be as seldom shut as the memorable temple of old.

"*Slow to go to war!*" This very journal—the Times—told its readers, but a short time ago, that the British Government went to war with Burmah for a disputed claim of £990.

"*Slow to go to war!*" but quick enough to go to war with China, in order to compel that country to permit the importation of opium—a drug destructive of the health and morals of its people; and successful enough to make that privilege one of the conditions of peace, equal to £7,000,000 sterling annually. I merely glance at this subject, for I have no wish to follow its details. They are before the world, and will pass to the judgment of posterity.

"*Slow to go to war!*" The last accounts from India tell us that the populous kingdom of Oude is about to follow the fate of the other native Governments of Hindostan; and to swell the mighty possessions of the Merchant Company which rules the immense territories upon the Indus and the Ganges.

Mr. President, I desire to do no injustice to England. I appreciate all she has done for the intellectual advancement of mankind, for morality and civilization. But when she plays the Pharisee, and thanks God she is not like other nations, but shuns war and acquisitions, I, for one, feel little disposed to yield to the boasts or denunciations of her politicians or her journals. I have touched but a few facts in her career. They might be made to assume a formidable array. I refer to nothing which is not before the world and a legitimate topic of examination. He who believes that the wrath of England may be deprecated, or her designs "turned away" by studied silence in our country, or in this high place of our country, knows little of the ceaseless opera-



tion of human rivalry and ambition. I am not one of those who believe that by shutting our eyes to danger we may avert it. That is best done by looking it in the face and preparing for it. No nation ever escaped war by closing their eyes to its approach; and no nation ever brought it on by the exhibition of a resolute determination to resist aggression.

We have already, sir, it appears to me, treated this subject quite delicately—gingerly I may say—in the Senate. We had better look at things as they are, and call them by their right names. I sincerely trust we shall have no war. And when I consider the condition of the two countries, and the calamitous effect of a war upon both, I can hardly believe that English statesmen will push the differences to that extremity, though certainly there are ominous portents above the horizon which warns us that a storm may not be far off. But, at any rate, our safety will not be increased nor danger diminished by sitting still and closing our eyes, and our ears, and our mouths to everything around us, suffering events to take their own course, controlled by, not controlling, them. The latest accounts tell us that several regiments have been ordered from England to Canada. I doubt the truth of the report. Some years ago, and without reference to the Russian war, the British Government withdrew a large portion of its troops from that province. It did not need them there; it does not need them there now, either for the purpose of defense or of police. There is no more immediate fear of an opposition to British authority in Canada than there is in London. If these troops have been really ordered there, the measure is an act of precaution or of menace, foreshadowing ulterior objects which depend on the determination of the British Government.

I have seen no speeches in either House of the British Parliament, from any member of the Gov-

ernment, which give rise to the least expectation that the views of the Ministry will be changed respecting the differences arising out of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty. I see, indeed, there are intimations that they would be willing to submit these differences to the arbitrament of some friendly Power. For one, sir, I do not perceive how such a proposition can be accepted. The question in dispute is hardly a question of reference. It does not relate to disputed facts, nor to the fair construction of the engagements of the parties. It is a mere question as to the meaning of a word—the word occupy, to bring the matter within its narrowest compass. I should as soon think of referring to arbitration the meaning of the words FREE, SOVEREIGN, AND INDEPENDENT STATES, in the treaty of peace with Great Britain which recognizes our independence, as the words occupy and assume and exercise dominion, in the Clayton-Bulwer treaty. The former measure would be just as reasonable and honorable as the latter. No arbitrator, whether understanding the English language or not, can tell us better than we now know what a treaty means when it says, that neither party shall occupy or possess any dominion in Central America, except in the single case provided for in the rider annexed to it. If any other occupation is retained, the treaty is violated. And we profess to know what occupation means, without resorting to the lexicographical knowledge or good offices of friend or foe. If England can hold possession without occupation, she may make out her case. If she cannot, ours is made out. The reference of such a question would be but a subterfuge unworthy of our position and our cause.

Under these circumstances, and in the state of our foreign relations, I shall vote for the proposition of the Military Committee. I think we are called upon to do so by considerations which will be felt and approved by the American people.

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